

Anomalous al-Andalus: Time, Space, Desire

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‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 853) in his *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh* (*History Book*) relates that Mūsā b. Nuṣayr (c. 640–717), the conqueror of al-Andalus, returned to Damascus shortly before the death of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705–15).¹ There in the caliphal court, in the presence of the central authorities, Mūsā presented to the ailing Commander of the Faithful the wondrous treasures he had acquired in the conquest, including the jewel-encrusted Table of Sulaymān b. Dāwūd (King Solomon of the Old Testament) as well as thousands of slaves, male and female, taken in battle. The caliph joyfully took possession of these riches whose magnificence and quantity showed that Mūsā was the most successful Muslim conqueror of all. Shortly after this event, al-Walīd died, and his successor and brother Sulaymān (r. 715–17), who hated Mūsā, immediately arrested the venerable conqueror and threatened to banish him, scatter his followers, and humiliate him, which he proceeded to do by exposing Mūsā to the sun on a hot summer day. The corpulent, aged Mūsā (who would have been about 75 years old at the time) soon lost consciousness and collapsed in the heat. The pathetic image of Mūsā’s crumpled body so moved Sulaymān that he relented and entrusted the infirm conqueror to one of his closest companions, Yezīd b. al-Muhallab. He took care of Mūsā until he had fully recovered and then negotiated a settlement between the angry caliph and the humbled conqueror, who paid the immense fine of one million dinars for his pardon.²

1 I identify characters by their Arabic names and often provide their more familiar English names in parentheses; I usually identify places by their current English names and provide their Arabic names in parentheses, except for al-Andalus, al-Maghrib, and Ifrīqīya, territories that simply do not correspond to modern Spain, Morocco, or North Africa.

2 (Ibn Ḥabīb), ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh* (*History*), ed Jorge Aguadé, Fuentes Arábico-hispanas, 1 (Madrid, 1991), p. 197. I have discussed the relationship between Mūsā and Yezīd b. al-Muhallab elsewhere: Denise K. Filios, “A good story well told: memory, identity, and the conquest of Iberia,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6.2 (2014), 127–47. Finding the Table of Sulaymān b. Dāwūd in al-Andalus, specifically in Toledo (Ṭulayṭula), helped legitimate the Islamic conquest of al-Andalus by construing that territory as destined to be

Ibn Ḥabīb's account of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr's reception in the capital of the Islamic Empire nicely illustrates the powerful emotions provoked by al-Andalus and its conqueror: both desire and fear. Represented as a peripheral space that housed immense wealth, al-Andalus was unique among the western conquests. Not only was it quickly and relatively easily conquered, in contrast with resistant Ifrīqīya (North Africa, present-day Tunisia and Algeria) and al-Maghrib (northwestern Africa, present-day Algeria and Morocco), but the enormous treasure found within it enriched Mūsā to the point that his personal wealth probably exceeded that of the caliph, making him a potential threat to the central authorities.³ While Ibn Ḥabīb has Mūsā insist that he never even thought about rebelling against his Umayyad patrons, the other major ninth-century historian who relates the conquest of al-Andalus, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 853) in his *Futūḥ Miṣr* (*The Conquest of Egypt*),⁴ presents

incorporated into the Caliphate, the Muslim rulers thereby becoming the successors to the Jewish, Roman, and Visigothic civilizations through whose hands the table had passed: M.J. Rubiera Mata, "La mesa de Salomon," *Awraq* 3 (1980), 26–31; María Grego Gómez, "Primeras noticias sobre Ṭulayṭula: Ibn Ḥabīb e Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam," *Qurtuba* 6 (2001), 59–75; Julia Hernández Juberías, *La península imaginaria, Mitos y leyendas sobre al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1996), pp. 208–48; Nicola Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia: Medieval Arabic Narratives* (London, 2012), pp. 84–101. For Ibn Ḥabīb's biography, see Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, pp. 15–46). Ibn Ḥabīb's account of the conquest has been partially translated into Spanish: Martínez Antuña, "Notas de Ibn Abī Riqā' de las lecciones de Ibn Ḥabīb acerca de la conquista de España por los árabes," *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 1.2 (1944) 248–68; pp. 253–65. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Arabic are mine.

- 3 While the amount of time necessary to fully subjugate the Iberian Peninsula is subject to scholarly dispute, according to early Islamic historiography, it was conquered between 711–14, in contrast with the several campaigns necessary to subject Ifrīqīya that took place from 642–98, and al-Maghrib, from 670–710. The majority Berber inhabitants of Ifrīqīya and al-Maghrib rebelled against centralized Islamic rule in 739, and effectively remained independent from that date, with a nominal recognition of central rule. Studies of the conquest include: Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710–797* (Oxford, 1989); 'Abdulwāhid Dhanūn Ṭāha, *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain* (London, 1989); Pedro Chalmeta, *Invasión e islamización: La sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1994); and Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas. Los Omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus* (Barcelona, 2006). See Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* (London, 1996) for a political history of al-Andalus. Both Ibn Ḥabīb (*Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, nos. 396–97, 403–07, 410–13, pp. 137–38, 140–41, 142–43) and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (*The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain, known as the Futūḥ Miṣr of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam*, ed Charles C. Torrey (New Haven, 1922), pp. 207–10) relate many stories about the amazing treasures found in al-Andalus, including several tales about fraud and theft: Eduardo Manzano Moreno, "Las fuentes árabes sobre la conquista de al-Andalus: una nueva interpretación," *Hispania* 59/2 (1999): 389–432; pp. 421–24.
- 4 For Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's biography, see F. Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Iowa. 29 November 2009 http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3028; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Conquista de*

Mūsā and his sons as arrogant, greedy men who abused their subordinates and may have tried to establish an independent domain in the far west on the edge of the Islamic Empire.

Elsewhere I have argued that Ibn Ḥabīb and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam—two ninth-century Egyptian-trained Malikī jurists who studied with the same legal authorities and drew on the same body of historical knowledge—diverge in their accounts of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr due to their positionality within the Islamic realm. The Andalusī Ibn Ḥabīb celebrates the man who introduced Islam into the Iberian Peninsula, while the Egyptian Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam condemns Mūsā as corrupt and inept, supporting his implication that al-Andalus was never fully Islamized or incorporated into the Islamic Empire.⁵ Here I want to explore the gender norms that inform these contrasting portrayals of Mūsā. I argue that both historians use Mūsā as a figure of memory⁶ whose personal qualities symbolize those of the space he is most associated with: al-Andalus. While they diverge in their judgment of Mūsā’s character, they both highlight the challenges he, his sons, and the territory they conquered present to the normative hierarchy as promoted by the centralized authorities. These two depictions of Mūsā construct al-Andalus as a queer space where normative binaries converge.⁷ By doing so, they contribute to a discourse of Andalusian exceptionalism that continues to infuse popular and scholarly discussions of “Muslim Spain.”

I wish to linger on the image of the elderly and plump Mūsā, fainting in the intense Damascene sunlight, observed by the newly invested caliph Sulaymān and his officials. Before his collapse, the amazingly successful conqueror had appeared to Sulaymān as a powerful threat whose physical, military and economic strength, loyalty to the previous caliph, and religious authority made

Africa del Norte y de España, trans Elisio Vidal Beltrán, *Textos Medievales*, 17 (Valencia, 1966), p. 11; and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*. The section of *Futūḥ Miṣr* that treats the conquest of Iberia has been translated into Spanish by Elisio Vidal Beltrán (*Conquista de Africa del Norte y de España*), to French by Albert Gateau (“Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam. La conquête de l’Afrique du Nord et de l’Espagne (traduction annotée),” *Revue Tunisienne*, 23–24 (1935), 247–70), and into English by John Harris Jones (*The History of the Conquest of Spain* (New York, 1969)).

5 Denise K. Filios, “A Good Story Well Told.”

6 I take the term “figure of memory” from Assmann, meaning an historical or legendary character whose memory serves as a foundation for a social group: Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011).

7 My discussion of al-Andalus as a queer space is informed by Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York, 2005); and Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, 2012).

him a manly figure whose stature could perhaps eclipse that of the new caliph.⁸ The sight of Mūsā's suffering, weak body moves Sulaymān, who now sees a vulnerable old man on the point of death, a spectacle that shames him and forces him to recognize the injustice of the humiliating punishment he had imposed on a loyal subject. Ibn Ḥabīb has Sulaymān's designated successor 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, the Umayyad caliph most affirmatively depicted in Islamic tradition,⁹ voice his intense grief at the sight of Mūsā's tortured body, saying he never felt greater sorrow than on that day, given Mūsā's righteousness (*ṣalāh*), his work on behalf of God, and what God had conquered by Mūsā's hands (*mā iftitaha Allāh 'ala yadīhi*).¹⁰ 'Umar's citation is the closest Ibn Ḥabīb comes to openly accusing Sulaymān of acting unjustly toward Mūsā. If Mūsā as an agent of divine will embodied the successful conquest and Islamization of al-Andalus, then Sulaymān's cruelty had publicly exposed his physical weakness, stripping him of his aura and revealing him to be merely an old man, deserving of compassion.

The disjuncture between the images of Mūsā the triumphant warrior and Mūsā the vulnerable old man points to the unsettling effect the conqueror of al-Andalus has on the capital, as he sparks both tremendous fear and powerful desire in the central authorities who gaze on his body. Mūsā's body very rarely receives attention in the accounts of either Ibn Ḥabīb or Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, so this moment in which all eyes are focused on his aged and exhausted body stands out. This moment marks a shift not only in Sulaymān's view of the

8 Both Ibn Ḥabīb (*Kitāb al-Ta'rīkh*, no. 425, p. 147) and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (*The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, p. 211) relate the conflict between the caliph al-Walīd and his brother and designated successor Sulaymān, over which one would get to receive the triumphant conqueror and the magnificent treasures he brought from the West. Sulaymān, knowing of his brother's fatal illness, wrote to Mūsā urging him to delay his arrival until after al-Walīd's death, while al-Walīd, Mūsā's long-time patron, wrote urging him to return as quickly as possible. Mūsā's reception marked the glorious end of al-Walīd's reign rather than the glorious beginning of that of Sulaymān. Both accounts call particular attention to the Table of Sulaymān, the most notable item found in al-Andalus, underlining the significance of the new caliph's name, but they differ as to whether the caliph resembles the wise and just Prophet Sulaymān (see my discussion in Filios, "A Good Story Well Told").

9 In general the Umayyad caliphs of Damascus are negatively portrayed in Islamic historical tradition, accused of converting the Caliphate into a hereditary dynasty: G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: the Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750* (New York, 2000), pp. 11–15, p. 50, p. 118. 'Umar II is an exception, perhaps due to his self-presentation as the *mahdī*: see Antoine Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace syrien sous les dernier Omeyyades et les premier Abbassides* (v. 72–193/692–809) (Leiden, 2011), pp. 291–7; Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, pp. 72–73; and Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 91–93, pp. 167–69.

10 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīkh*, no. 428, p. 147.

conqueror but also in Mūsā's character, as he has arrived at the lowest point in his career, unmanned by his fall from grace, publicly revealed to be a failure. The failure enacted by Mūsā's abject form is complex and significant in multiple ways. For Ibn Ḥabīb, the Andalusian conqueror had already shown himself to be a failure while in the far west, when he chose to ignore multiple boundary markers and insisted on entering and exploring a territory he should have known was off limits. As I discuss below, by entering that territory Mūsā exceeded his divine mandate, but he did not suffer immediate punishment for doing so.¹¹ If we read Mūsā's very corporeal humiliation before the caliph's court as retribution for his arrogant behavior in the far west, then his exposure as a failure is just and reflects divine will. However, the Caliph Sulaymān also sees his own failure to enact justice in Mūsā's crumpled body, since, rather than celebrate his achievements as a loyal subject, the new caliph, instead, acted on his fear and anger, victimizing an old man. While he tries to redeem himself by relenting and entrusting Mūsā to the care of a faithful companion, Sulaymān nonetheless demands that Mūsā pay one million dinars to resolve their dispute, showing that the new caliph still feels the need to strip the conqueror of much of his fortune. In short, Ibn Ḥabīb depicts Sulaymān's treatment of Mūsā as motivated by fear and the need to contain the threat the aged conqueror posed to the center, even as the new caliph desires the old man's companionship and conversation. Mūsā and Sulaymān expose each other's failures, and they seem compelled to continue to repeatedly fail to come to terms with each other.

In keeping with Jack Halberstam's explorations of the possibilities and productivity offered by failure as a mode of unbeing and unbecoming in *The Queer Art of Failure*, I suggest that this failure rebounds in Mūsā's favor. Not only does it humanize him and spark compassion in his onlookers, but as I will show it also enables him to adopt a new relationship to knowledge, especially that acquired in his experiences on the far western edge of the known world, and to assume a new role as a non-conforming member of the caliph's court, a designated outsider who is also to a certain extent an insider. In Ibn Ḥabīb's account, the end of Mūsā's life is characterized by his incomplete transition, no longer a successful conqueror but also not able to integrate fully into the

11 The fact that many of the soldiers who steal treasures are immediately and miraculously punished with death, as related by Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, nos. 397, 410–11, pp. 138, 142, highlights the delay between Mūsā's transgression and his punishment, as also does Ibn Ḥabīb's enigmatic moralistic comment before he relates Mūsā's reception in Damascus, in which he warns that worldly men eventually lose their wealth and their souls: Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, no. 426, p. 147.

caliph's court, a failure that deprives the center of the knowledge he acquired in the west, knowledge that could have enriched the body of authoritative wisdom that constitutes the basis of Umayyad caliphal legitimacy. Mūsā's inability to make his new understanding intelligible to the Caliph Sulaymān exposes the vapidity of Damascene values without providing a viable alternative that could help prevent the disastrous future that Ibn Ḥabīb envisions in his closing eschatological predictions.¹²

According to Ibn Ḥabīb's account, Mūsā always verged on the wondrous and ended his life as a living marvel. Ibn Ḥabīb first hints at Mūsā's anomalous character before the conquest of al-Andalus, when he attributes to him the knowledge of the stars (*ʿilm an-nujūm*)¹³ that enables him to give accurate, explicit instructions to Ṭāriq, his *mawlā*¹⁴ and lieutenant, as to what he must do in order to conquer al-Andalus, including destroying a protective talisman shaped like a bull and choosing a man with a cast in his eye and a withered hand to lead the invasion forces, a man who turns out to be Ṭāriq himself.¹⁵ Mūsā's mysterious knowledge appears again when, following the subjugation of the Iberian Peninsula, he continues west into the Boundary Sea (*al-bahr al-muḥīt*, the encircling sea, or the Atlantic Ocean). In the islands he comes upon there he finds many marvels, including: a bronze statue that shoots arrows, killing two men, before falling into the sea; demons (*shīṭān*, pl. *shīṭāṭin*) imprisoned by the Prophet Sulaymān in bronze cubes whose location is indicated by

12 My comments here draw on Janina Safran's discussion of Ibn Ḥabīb's "Landscape of Fear": Janina Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), pp. 143–50; Idem, "Identity and Differentiation in Ninth-Century al-Andalus," *Speculum* 76 (2001), 573–98; see also Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, pp. 291–97, who discusses eschatological expectations connected with the year 100 H, including ʿUmar II's construction of himself as the *maḥdī*, a role that the Caliph Sulaymān may have adopted earlier.

13 For a discussion of Mūsā's astronomical abilities, see Julio Samsó, "¿Fue Musa ibn Nusayr Astrónomo?", *Medievalia* 9 (1990), 231–36; and Manuela Marín, "ʿIlm al-nujūm e ʿilm al-ḥidḥān en al-Andalus," in *Actas del XII Congreso de la Unión Européenne des Arabisants et Islamistants* (Málaga, 1984), eds M. Paz Torres and M. Marín (Madrid, 1986), pp. 509–35.

14 *Mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*), often translated as "client" or "freedman," was a conquest-era practice that enabled non-Arabs, often freed slaves, to integrate into the Arab tribal system as inferior members obligated loyally to serve their patrons: see Maribel Fierro, "*Mawālī* and *muwalladūn* in al-Andalus," in *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, eds Monique Bernards and John Nawas (Leiden Brill, 2005), pp. 195–245; and Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, UK, 1980). Much of Mūsā's power derived from the immense number of *mawālī* and slaves he had acquired during his long career subjugating Ifrīqiya, al-Maghrib, and al-Andalus, effectively providing him with a private army.

15 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Taʾrikh*, no. 394, pp. 136–37.

statues pointing at the ground where they lie buried; and copper cities that Mūsā repeatedly tries to enter but ultimately fails to do so, the first time he ever seems to have failed at anything since he began his military campaigns.¹⁶ As Julia Hernández Juberías and Manuela Marín have noted, in this strange space, Mūsā assumes many of the attributes of Dū al-Qarnayn—a Qurʾānic figure often identified with Alexander the Great—as well as the Prophets Mūsā (Moses) and Sulaymān (Solomon), all of whom traveled to the edges of the world.¹⁷ Like Dū al-Qarnayn and the Prophet Mūsā before him, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr exceeds his divine mandate by insisting on exploring this strange space and engaging with objects the Prophet Sulaymān placed there in order to remove them from the known world.¹⁸ Mūsā often explains the mysterious objects they encounter to his men, and even labels a few *ʿajāʾib*, marvels, so he seems to know that these objects are forbidden and pose an existential threat to those who engage with them. Nonetheless, he attempts to subjugate them: passing by the shooting statue that marks the edge of the knowable world and tries to stop those who would proceed further west; repeatedly attempting to enter the copper cities; digging up the bronze cubes, breaking them open and releasing demons who fly off, two of whom even mistake Mūsā for the Prophet Sulaymān who had imprisoned them. In this extreme western space, Mūsā seemingly acts on his knowledge, but he also ignores the glaring fact that he is transgressing by entering and trying to conquer this space.

This series of adventures, found in Ibn Ḥabīb's account but not in that of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, is weird, anomalous both in the historiographical tradition¹⁹ and in Mūsā's career. He seems to experience failure for the first time within this extreme western space, underlining yet more the oddness of his insistence to continue exploring that space. His encounters with objects placed there by the Prophet Sulaymān bring him into direct contact with the past, producing

16 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*, nos. 415–421, pp. 143–46. Melchor Martínez Antuña mistakenly translates *al-bahr al-muḥīṭ* as the Mediterranean Sea; Melchor Martínez Antuña, “Notas de Ibn Abī Riqā,” p. 261. The marvels Mūsā encounters in the West are discussed by Hernández Juberías, *La península imaginaria*, pp. 21–119; Safran, *Second Umayyad Caliphate*, pp. 147–50; and Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia*, pp. 69–83.

17 Hernández Juberías, *La península imaginaria*, p. 26; and Marín “Legends”.

18 On parallels between Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, Dū al-Qarnayn, and the Prophet Sulaymān, see Manuela Marín, “Legends on Alexander the Great in Moslem Spain,” *Graeco-Arabica* 4.4 (1991), pp. 71–89; and Hernández Juberías, *La península imaginaria*. For the memory of the Prophet Mūsā in Islamic tradition, see Brandon M. Wheeler “Moses or Alexander? Early Islamic Exegesis of Qurʾān 18:60–65,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57.3 (1998), pp. 191–215; and Idem, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* (London, 2002).

19 Such legends are more characteristic of Islamic geography, not historiography: Nicola Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia*, pp. 69–83.

temporal confusion in the two demons who mistake him for Sulaymān, pointing to how these encounters blur Mūsā's identity. His travels move him spatially and temporally, making him yet more anomalous. Mūsā's contact with marvelous objects (*'ajab*, pl. *'ajā'ib*) seems to make him a marvel; his engaging with these out-of-bounds items makes him a carrier of their boundary confusion. After he returns to the known world of al-Andalus and Syria, he exhibits prophetic knowledge, repeatedly issuing enigmatic statements about future events.²⁰

Mūsā most overtly performs wondrousness in his interactions with the Caliph Sulaymān, especially in three conversations they have about the West. In the first Sulaymān seems to debrief Mūsā, seeking strategic information about his battle tactics and the peoples with whom he came into contact. Some of the caliph's questions Mūsā answers succinctly, exhibiting piety and reticence, but he engages in long and judgmental descriptions of the Byzantines, the Berbers, the Andalusians, and the Franks, emphasizing their curious customs and vices, and he ends his account bragging that he was never defeated in battle and hardly suffered any casualties. The caliph reacts to Mūsā's answers by laughing and exhibiting amazement, as though unable to comprehend the knowledge Mūsā tells him. In the other two conversations, Mūsā rebukes Sulaymān for marveling at a large metal basin of great value and an immense herd of sheep, Mūsā claiming that he had given al-Walīd jewels and treasures ten times more valuable than that basin and that his *mawālī* had herds of sheep twice as large.²¹ These conversations leave the caliph speechless and marveling (*'ajaba*) at Mūsā's words, incredulous or simply unable to assimilate this information which denigrates central norms. The fact that Mūsā's stories about the West are displaced temporally and spatially, focused on his past experiences and the wealth he and his followers had over there, makes them more incredible. Not only does Mūsā lack any material evidence to substantiate his claims, but these stories demonstrate that he too is out of place and out of time, unable to conform to the values and norms of the Center. These tales also illustrate how much he has lost; however, rather than mourning his present poverty, Mūsā upbraids Sulaymān for his inability to correctly assess the value of the worldly goods he has before him, goods not worth the high estimation the caliph bestows on them. These dialogues have Mūsā enact the role of an ascetic moralist whose lived experiences have led him to renounce the worldly values that dominate in the caliphal court. The caliph's reactions suggest that he is unable

20 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, nos. 423, 433, pp. 146, 149.

21 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, nos. 430–32, pp. 148–49.

to understand or appreciate the wisdom Mūsā presents to him, obsessed as he is with his own worldly wealth.²² These conversations repeatedly exhibit the two men's failure to communicate as well as their mutual desire to interact around Mūsā's stories of the marvelous West.

Gharb, the West, is cognate with *gharā'ib*, marvels, as both are built on the root *gha-ra-ba* (*gharaba*, to go away; *gharuba*, to be strange or odd), which is also the root for *gharīb*, queer, according to the *Concise Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary*.²³ The perceived strangeness of the West is not quite an Islamic "Occidentalism"; in medieval Islamic geography the edges of the world in general are seen as marvelous spaces inhabited by threatening creatures, such as Gog and Magog [*Yājūj wa Mājūj*] in the North, against whom Ḍū al-Qarnayn built a wall to prevent them from entering the inhabited world.²⁴ It is the conceptual distance between the western edge of the world and the Islamic center, be that Mecca or the caliphal court in Damascus, that makes al-Andalus an anomalous space. While Mūsā already possessed some marvelous qualities before his adventures in the extreme west, he emerges yet more *gharīb*, queered by his experiences, his contact with marvels, and the knowledge he acquired in that zone in which time and space function differently. While that queerness makes him an often uncomfortable presence in the caliphal court, it also makes him a object of desire and fascination, especially for the Caliph Sulaymān.

To claim that Mūsā b. Nuṣayr is a queer subject may seem to overlook the obvious ways in which he is heteronormative. He was the father of three sons, 'Abd al-'Azīz, 'Abd Allāh, and Marwān, themselves successful conquerors who succeeded their father as the governors of al-Andalus and Ifrīqīya. The possibility that Mūsā and his sons tried to establish an independent dynasty in the West has been suggested as an explanation of the Caliph Sulaymān's harsh treatment of Mūsā and his putative involvement in the murder of 'Abd

22 Elsewhere I have analyzed Mūsā's conversation with Yezīd b. al-Muhallab (Ibn Ḥabīb *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, no. 429, p. 148) as similarly critiquing the values of the caliphal court ("A good story well told").

23 N.S. Doniach ed, *Concise Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary of Current Usage* (Oxford, 1982), p. 313. I will discuss some drawbacks of this term at the end of this article. For a definition of *'aja'ib* and *gharā'ib* in Islamic tradition, see Julia Hernández Juberías, *La península imaginaria*, pp. 14–15, 19, 249–55. On the West as marvelous, see Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 13–21.

24 On Islamic conceptions of the edges of the world, see Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia*, pp. 69–83; and Travis E. Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers Across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation and the 'Abbāsīd Empire* (London, 2011), pp. 1–12.

al-‘Azīz.²⁵ Mūsā’s immense wealth acquired during his successful military career may well be the attribute that provokes conventional desire and fear in the central authorities. Finally, Mūsā’s primary identity is determined by his highly masculine role as a conqueror who violently imposed Islamic rule on al-Maghrib and al-Andalus. Notably, the history of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam includes several anecdotes that equate conquest with rape, such as the comment that “‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d was the conqueror [*iftaḥa*] of Ifrīqīya, while others say that he was the deflowerer [*iftara*] of Ifrīqīya,”²⁶ language that underlines the normative violent masculinity attributed to conquerors. However, as I will show, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam presents Mūsā as a failed conqueror in his account of the conquest of al-Andalus, insisting that the real conqueror of that territory was Mūsā’s lieutenant Ṭāriq. Moreover, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam shows that normative gender and religious hierarchy was repeatedly violated in the conquest of al-Andalus, stories that besmirch the manliness of Mūsā and of his son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, whose murder also deprives Mūsā of his ability to bequeath a patrimony to his male descendants.

While Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam assumes a very hostile stance toward Mūsā, in contrast with Ibn Ḥabīb who embraces and celebrates Mūsā as a flawed but still exemplary figure, both writers depict him as deviating from conqueror norms in his conduct in the West. Ibn Ḥabīb construes Mūsā’s deviance in positive terms, reflecting his experiences in the Boundary Sea which endowed him with marvelous qualities and knowledge, suggesting that Mūsā followed a queering trajectory in the final phase of his western campaign, causing him to return to Damascus profoundly altered, rendered *gharīb* by his actions and experiences in the West, a queerness that, if more fully appreciated by the desirous Caliph Sulaymān, could have realigned the vapid mores that dominate the capital. While Mūsā’s queerness is gendered and bodily, it is not explicitly sexual; nonetheless, it charges his relationship with Sulaymān, also fraught due to their hierarchical and generational conflict. For Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, Mūsā’s deviance is merely criminal, the failings of an arrogant and inept commander who lost control of his subordinate Ṭāriq, the real conqueror of al-Andalus.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account of the conquest begins with Mūsā, having completed the subjugation of al-Maghrib, appointing Ṭāriq b. Ziyād commander of the garrison in Tangiers [Ṭanja] and returning to Kairouan [Qayrawān] in Ifrīqīya. Acting independently, Ṭāriq establishes friendly relations with Yuliyān [Julian], the ruler of Ceuta [Septa], who respects the authority of Luḍrīq

25 That Mūsā and his sons may have tried to establish an independent dynasty is mentioned by Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, p. 19, and Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, p. 60.

26 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 185–86; p. 303 n.3.

[Roderic], the king of al-Andalus. When Luḍrīq impregnates Yuliyān's daughter, violating normative homosocial relations between a lord and his subordinate, and inappropriately directing sexual aggression against an in-group woman rather than against a resistant outsider,²⁷ her father turns to Ṭāriq to avenge himself, proposing the Muslim invasion of al-Andalus. With Yuliyān's aid, Ṭāriq quickly crosses the Strait and defeats Luḍrīq in battle, then proceeds to Toledo [Ṭulayṭula] where he takes possession of the Table of Sulaymān b. Dāwūd, removing a leg and replacing it with a replica, before returning to Cordoba [Qurṭuba] and finally informing his superior Mūsā of his achievements. The invidious Mūsā writes to al-Walīd, claiming that he had conquered al-Andalus, then travels to Cordoba and publicly disciplines his too-independent subordinate, who says, "I am your client [*mawlāk*] and this conquest is yours [*hāḍa al-faṭḥ lik*]," submitting to Mūsā and surrendering to him all the plunder he had acquired, including the table.²⁸

The conflict between the two commanders remains unresolved until after their return to the caliphal court. Notably, Ṭāriq does not appear in Ibn Ḥabīb's account of Mūsā's reception by al-Walīd. In his account, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam has Ṭāriq interrupt Mūsā's presentation of the treasures, saying that he was the one who found the table. When Mūsā claims that Ṭāriq is lying, the latter urges the caliph to scrutinize the table, and when he notices the odd leg, Ṭāriq suggests that the caliph ask Mūsā about it. Mūsā says the table was like that when he got it, so Ṭāriq brandishes the leg he had removed from the table, a phallic gesture that destroys Mūsā's credibility and culminates in his being stripped of his wealth and status.²⁹ Mūsā's abasement is completed when his son 'Abd al-'Azīz, the governor of al-Andalus, is murdered because he is suspected of having converted to Christianity due to his wife, Luḍrīq's daughter; a conversion that would have inverted proper ethnic, gender, and religious hierarchies. 'Abd al-'Azīz's head is sent to Damascus and shown to his horrified father who is forced to consent to his son's murder before the unsympathetic eyes of Sulaymān's court.³⁰

27 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam suggests the sexual subjugation of out-group women is an admirable part of conquest action, in his anecdotes about the daughter of Jurjir (*The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, p. 185) and the Berber queen al-Kāhina (*The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 200–02).

28 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 204–08, citation on p. 207, vv. 19–20.

29 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, p. 211.

30 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 211–13. The portrayal of 'Abd al-'Azīz's marriage as an example of the dangers of intermarriage is discussed by Janina Safran, "Identity and Differentiation"; and Barton, *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines*.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s depiction of Mūsā is relentlessly negative, motivated by a fear of the disorder presented to established hierarchies by al-Andalus, symbolized in the person of Mūsā whom, rather than ambivalently queer, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam depicts as arrogant, abusive, and disloyal, a villain who fully deserves the humiliations heaped upon him. By contrast, Ibn Ḥabīb’s Mūsā becomes increasingly queer throughout his account, an anomalousness fully revealed in the heart of the Islamic empire in confrontation with the central authorities who seek to impose their norms on the Andalusian conqueror. The fact that Mūsā evades their attempt to do so by fainting, succumbing to torture and revealing his bodily weakness, queers him yet more. While Mūsā does reconcile with the caliph, he still serves to repeatedly expose the inadequacy of Damascene ways of knowing in his conversations with him, when he testifies to western realities that from the point of view of the Center simply defy belief. In the final section of Ibn Ḥabīb’s account of Mūsā, he becomes the resident madman in the caliphal court, a holy fool who practices asceticism and issues wisdom statements that reject normative values, finally dying in Medina while on pilgrimage with Sulaymān, an exemplary death that reflects Ibn Ḥabīb’s celebration of Mūsā’s queerness.³¹

While Ibn Ḥabīb and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam express very different views of Mūsā, they both use him as a figure of memory who symbolizes the anomaly of al-Andalus, be that construed as criminal deviance and hierarchical confusion or productive queerness. By doing so, they contribute to discourses of Andalusian exceptionalism that have proved remarkably persistent, evident still today. This is not to claim that Ibn Ḥabīb and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam originated Andalusian exceptionalist discourses. More importantly, the anomaly they locate in the far western Islamic territory does not reside in its Islamic nature nor in the legitimacy of its conquest, but in the methods, identity, and character of its conquerors. By contrast, the discourses of Andalusian exceptionalism that originate in the post-Islamic era specifically locate the Andalusian anomaly in its Arabo-Islamic past, and query the extent to which that past has

Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia (Philadelphia, 2015), pp. 15–17. Mūsā’s son ‘Abd Allāh is later killed during a dispute over the governorship of Ifrīqiya, as related by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 213–15.

31 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh*, nos. 430–33, pp. 148–49. At Sulaymān’s court Mūsā enacts many behaviors associated with holy fools and ascetic wise men who reject the world: see John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Servanthood* (Berkeley, 2008) for a discussion of such behaviors. By contrast, in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*, p. 213, despite the fact that Mūsā never establishes good relations with Sulaymān, the caliph does order the ailing conqueror to accompany him on pilgrimage, in the course of which Mūsā dies, in Murr, not Medina, in 715–16 (97 H).

determined Spain's future. While Iberia was not the only western European territory occupied by Muslims during the Middle Ages,³² the extent of the territory under Muslim rule and its duration, up to 781 years in some parts of modern Andalusia, do mark the political, religious, and cultural history of Iberia during the period in which modern European nation-states locate their origin. At stake in such discourses is the Europeanness of Spain, the extent to which Spain conforms to European norms or was essentially shaped by its Islamic past, construed as a queer dissonance antithetical to European culture.

Andalusian exceptionalist discourses inform such important historiographical myths as the *Reconquista*, *convivencia*, and conquest denialism. These three myths ostentate a certain attitude toward the Muslim presence in medieval Iberia, either hostile or accepting, and insist that the medieval Islamic past still matters in contemporary Spain. Of these three, the most hostile to Islam is the *Reconquista* myth, which construes Islamic rule as an error of history rectified by the Christian "reconquest" of al-Andalus. This ideology sees that development not as the political expansion of kingdoms that came into being after 711 but as the action of successors of the Gothic rulers of pre-711 Hispania who recuperated their patrimony from foreign infidel usurpers. While elements of the Neo-Gothic myth are evident in ninth-century Asturian-Leonese historiography, the term "*Reconquista*" was not introduced until the late eighteenth century; the term most frequently used to refer to the wars of Christian expansion into al-Andalus during the Middle Ages was "*restauración*" (restoration). The concept that Muslims were illegitimate occupiers of Christian Spain did not become a dominant political-religious ideology until the thirteenth century, during the rapid expansion of Castile, Aragon and Portugal following the 1212 collapse of the Almohad dynasty, and acquired particular urgency in fifteenth-century Castile in the face of an extended civil war and political crises. Nonetheless, *Reconquista* became a Spanish foundational myth over the course of the nineteenth century, acquired particular prominence in Franco-era historiography, and is still a current Spanish nationalist discourse that equates Spanish identity with Catholicism, and resists increasing secularism and multiculturalism in the post-dictatorship era.³³

32 Other European spaces occupied by Muslims during the Middle Ages include colonies in France, northern Italy, and Switzerland: Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, *Muslim Colonies in France, Northern Italy, and Switzerland*, trans. Haroon Khan Sherwani (Lahore, 1964). They also include Sicily and Malta; on Sicilian and Maltese responses to their Arabo-Islamic past, see Karla Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean. Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp. 65–131.

33 The bibliography on *Reconquista* is enormous; the most current overview of the development and current uses of *Reconquista* in Spanish historiography is Martín F. Ríos Saloma,

Convivencia and conquest denialism are myths of more recent vintage, and both embrace the Islamic past as a glorious part of Spanish history. *Convivencia* proposes that Islamic tolerance toward the subjugated “People of the Book,” Christians and Jews, also called *dhimmī*, enabled a flourishing culture of productive collaboration between intellectuals and other cultural elites in al-Andalus, a cultural splendor unparalleled at the time, belying the evidence that Baghdad, Cairo, and other Islamic cultural centers enjoyed similar cultural and intellectual productivity at the time. The *convivencia* myth, despite its generalizing idealization of the often conflictual relations between social groups in medieval Iberia, does provide an important counterargument to the “Clash of Civilizations” myth that insists on the fundamental incompatibility of Christian and Islamic culture, portrays Islam as intolerant extremism, and arguably has licensed the degrading treatment of prisoners of the War on Terror. Notably, medieval *convivencia* is often invoked as a model for modern multicultural Europe, sometimes with the implication that modern Muslims should be as tolerant as their medieval coreligionists, showing that *convivencia* is not always incompatible with Islamophobic discourses.³⁴

Less well-known in the United States is the phenomenon of conquest denialism, the claim that Muslims did not invade and conquer Iberia, a claim popularized by Ignacio Olagüe, and recently thoroughly debunked by Alejandro

La reconquista en la historiografía española contemporánea (Madrid, 2013). On the origins of the *Reconquista*, see Manuel José Recuero Astray, *Orígenes de la reconquista en el occidente peninsular* (La Coruña, 1996).

- 34 Probably the book that most popularized the *convivencia* myth in the English-speaking world as an example of tolerant multiculturalism is María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston, 2002); see in particular her reflections following the 9–11 attacks in the post-script. For a recent use of the *convivencia* myth as a model for tolerance today, see Terrence Lovat and Robert Crotty, *Reconciling Islam, Christianity and Judaism: Islam's Special Role in Restoring Convivencia* (Cham, 2015); they do not argue that modern Muslims are intolerant but focus on Christian intolerance. Critiques of the *convivencia* myth are many; for a good recent analysis of the debate, see Ryan Szpiech, “The Convivencia Wars: Decoding Historiography’s Polemic with Philology,” in *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, eds Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Karla Mallette (Toronto, 2013), pp. 135–61. For a discussion of how the “Clash of Civilizations” myth and Western stereotypes about Muslims’ sexuality influenced the treatment of prisoners in the War on Terror, see Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 41–47; Momin Rahman, “Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities,” *Sociology* 44 (2010), 944–61; and Jasbir K. Puar, “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages,” *Social Text* 84–85, 23.3–4 (2005), pp. 121–39.

García Sanjuán.³⁵ While García Sanjuán is correct to label that myth a historiographical fraud, based as it is on a fundamental disregard of solid historical evidence, nonetheless, conquest denialism's insistence that Muslim identity is not incompatible with Spanish identity informs current political and social activism promoting the rights of Spain's Muslim inhabitants and citizens.³⁶ While *convivencia* and conquest denialism distort the historical record, they also can offer a more complex model of Spanish citizenship that does not construe Muslim identity as incompatible with the European values of democracy, secularism, and universal human rights, including LGBTQ+ rights.

The three myths of the *Reconquista*, *convivencia*, and conquest denialism invoke binarisms about Muslims and Christians, East and West, Africa and Europe, binarisms whose absoluteness they either defend or deny. They also highlight contemporary identitarian stakes in the medieval space of anomalous al-Andalus. While al-Andalus is certainly *not* an exception within the medieval Mediterranean world in which such binarisms almost never reflected local reality,³⁷ Andalusian exceptionalist discourses insistently assert such claims, in part due to the powerful attachment or revulsion inspired by the queerness of the Andalusian space.³⁸

I too am fascinated by al-Andalus and wish to claim it for my own projects, which are certainly not without an ideological and identitarian stake. My argument that the root *gha-ra-ba* links queerness—which I mostly use in accordance with Queer Theory as practiced in U.S. academia—with the West, may undercut my intervention in Andalusian and Mediterranean studies, leaving

35 See Ignacio Olagüe, *Les Arabes n'ont jamais envahi l'Espagne* (Paris, 1969) and Alejandro García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica de la península Ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado: del catastrofismo al negacionismo* (Madrid, 2013).

36 Alejandro García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, pp. 90–112, notes that conquest denialism has been embraced by Andalusian nationalists, including the community of Spanish converts to Islam who advocate for increased rights on behalf of the Muslim inhabitants of Spain: see Lisa Abend, “Spain's New Muslims: A Historical Romance,” in *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, eds Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman (New York, 2008), pp. 133–56.

37 Many scholars have debunked Andalusian exceptionalist myths; see, for example, Ross Brann, “Andalusi ‘Exceptionalism,’” in *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, eds Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Karla Mallette (Toronto, 2013), 119–34; and Manuela Marín, “Dos caras de un mito: las mujeres andalusíes,” *Revista de occidente* 224 (2000), 79–93. For Mediterranean distinctiveness, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden, MA, 2000), pp. 9–25.

38 Nostalgia for the lost paradise symbolized by al-Andalus also informs Andalusian exceptionalist discourses, as Brann notes, “Andalusi ‘Exceptionalism.’”

my argument open to the charge that I am imposing a Eurocentric model of queerness on an Islamic other that is also a temporal other.³⁹ To my knowledge, *gharīb* is not an identitarian position in contemporary LGBTQ+ communities within the Arab world (which is multiple). The label embraced by most LGBTQ+ activists is *mithlī* (masc. sing.), *mithlīa* (fem. sing), pl. *mithliyyūn/mithliyyāt*, “sameness,” referring to same-sex desire and contact, although as Gil Z. Hochberg acknowledges, that term does not connote the same political identities as gay, queer, and LGBTQ+ do. More traditional Arabic terms for same-sex practitioners tend to carry negative connotations, such as *lūṭī*, referring to the sin of Lot or sodomy, *saḥq/siḥāq* “rubbing” or lesbianism, and *shādd* [often transcribed as *shāzz*], “deviant.” Some Arab LGBTQ+ individuals are embracing *shādd/shāzz* as a preferred label, since its unspecified breadth can include many sex practices and desires, and the history of its use as an insult makes it a powerful label to adopt for one’s own identity.⁴⁰ The Andalusian queerness to which I refer does not directly correlate with contemporary identity politics. I hope it may, however, open up useful possibilities for conceptualizing the various ways in which discourses about sexuality and gender come into play in accounts of the conquest of al-Andalus, and their role in contemporary discourses about Andalusian exceptionalism.

39 My comments here refer to Massad’s criticism of “the ‘Gay International’” as imposing a Western model of LGBTQ+ identity on Arab practitioners of same-sex contact: Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, pp. 160–90. For thoughtful critiques of Massad’s argument, see Rahman, “Queer as Intersectionality”; and Sahar Amer, “Joseph Massad and the Alleged Violence of Human Rights,” *GLQ* 16 (2010), 649–53. For a commentary of the implications of the name ‘Abu Ghraib’ and the reaction to the photographs of prisoner abuse, see Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, “Abu Ghraib as a Microcosm: the Strange Face of Empire as a Lived Prison,” *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association* 27 (2007), pp. 29–55.

40 For Arabic terms for LGBTQ+ individuals and same-sex acts, see Gil Z. Hochberg, “Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure,” *GLQ* 16.4 (2010), 493–516; Sahar Amer, *Crossing Borders: Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 16–23; and Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, esp. pp. 108–9, 205, 250–51. For the debate over the use of *shādd/shāzz* as an Arabic equivalent for gay, see Katherine Ganly, “Arab World: Trouble for Gay Travels in the Muslim World,” *Global Voices*, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/07/15/arab-world-trouble-for-gay-travels-in-the-muslim-world/#> (Accessed 15 July 2009) especially the comments of Puzuzu in the discussion forum. *Shādd* and *lūṭī* are also listed as equivalents for “queer” in the *Concise Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary*, p. 313.

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